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Utah State University Residence Life Behind Closed Doors Weed Incident Actor

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Hannah McDonald
Logan, Utah
November 2018

Behind Closed Doors-Weed Incident Actor
Occupational Rite of Passage

Informant:

Hannah McDonald is a 21 year-old journalism student at Utah State University. She grew up in Las Vegas, and she came to USU because she wanted to be farther away from home. She got a job as a Resident Assistant during her sophomore year of college because her parents offered to pay for her freshman year housing, but she needed to pay for it on her own the rest of the time. She was assigned to work in the Student Living Center, and she worked in San Juan Hall for two years and Snow Hall for one. She considers the resident assistants on campus to be her main friend group.

Context:

This story was given to me while Hannah and I sat in the Lundstrom student center in the back couches. We were sitting so that she was facing forward off the couches, and I was facing Hannah. Hannah is a third year RA and went through her stories by year. We were with a couple other resident assistants, and I asked about what everybody still remembered about participating in Behind Closed Doors (BCDs) from the beginning of the semester. We have all participated in the event and were just telling casual stories with various highlights and points that really stuck out to us. Normally, stories about BCDs are shared between returners when the area staff first meets up for fall training. Some areas go to great lengths so that newly hired resident assistants and people in the class to be hired to be RA's don't hear about BCDs until they go through them. Stories are also shared when BCDs are over for the day and the returners and new RAs meet back up for staff bonding or dinner. They compare stories and experiences and brag about returners' acting abilities

Behind Closed Doors is technically part of training. It's several buildings in the Living Learning Community that is transformed into the most intense set of rounds (building checks) done during the daylight for new Resident Assistants to see where they freeze or panic in a safe replication of intense incidences. It's a learning opportunity to practice calling USU police and Prostaff, and to be coached through what to do by returning RAs. Generally BCDs go from the first floor to the fourth with incidences getting more difficult or stressful as you go up. The weed incident Hannah describes would have been on the third or fourth floor and have been a final incident for the new RAs to encounter.

Text:

So I was also an actor for BCDs this year, my third year as an RA. And you know, frankly, I think I just ran out of empathy this year. I've gotten a lot more apathetic this year. So I understand now why the actors try to make it as hard as possible because it's more fun to be completely cruel. So this year, I was assigned to a much more interesting one than the pet policy.

I was assigned along with Trenton Behunin to go and pretend like we were high on weed. And the two of us are the least likely candidates for that, probably. So I mean, it was an interesting combination. But we had a good time. I don't think either of us know what being high on weed feels like. So we just did our best. We just acted ridiculous for three hours. Was a good time...what did we do? We, told someone to sing us a bedtime story, or to tell us a bedtime story. We definitely went and partied with the people downstairs who were pretending to be drunk. They were playing the floor is lava. I don't remember—I just, we were having a very good time. No idea if it was accurate or not. But it was fun. And we were not nice to the people. So I feel actually not as bad about this; again, I think it's a lack of empathy that you just lose it the more you do the job. 'S probably not good for an RA position. Actually, that's very negative. Anyway that's it.

Texture:

Hannah talks very smoothly with lots of pauses and turns. She talks all the way through until she is almost running out of air. Hannah was comfortable sharing this story, and she talks with confidence about her experience and knowledge of the event. She paused when picking her words. Her delivery of “completely cruel” is not quite deadpan, but she very much had stopped caring, but she also had fondness in her voice.

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